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Kyra Clark,
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District 1199 New England
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Kyra Clark and I am a Certified Dental Assistant at UConn Health Center. I have done this work for 22 years and I love my job because I love taking care of my patients. As a Certified Dental Assistant, I assist the dentist during treatment. If a dentist doesn't have to work alone, the patient has a safer and better dental experience.

I am here today to ask that you continue to fund the budget for UConn Health. At the end of the day, we see patients that private practices may not see otherwise. As a public hospital we are the only institution that will take patients with behavioral issues such as autism. We are also obligated to work with patients that are on Medicare and Medicaid.

I came to UConn because it is one of the best workplaces for dental assistants in the state. The mission of this institution sees people as its bottom line, not profits. This mission makes UConn feel very different from the private practices where I used to work. Unfortunately, because of short staffing, our time off requests are getting denied or we are told to reschedule our medical appointments due to being understaff. This is not healthy for the staff especially in the middle of a pandemic when we need to be the healthiest we can be.

Short staffing means there are so many procedures going on at the same time that it is very rare for assistants to be able to practice four handed dentistry, which is when both a dentist and an assistant are working together throughout a procedure. This practice is used in dentistry because it moves the process along more smoothly for the patient and is necessary for many procedures. I often feel like I am not able to truly assist, because I am usually running around to prepare materials and clean and prepare the chairs for patients. If we had more resources and more staff, I would be able to actually do the job that I am trained for.

Please continue to fund UConn Health so we can hire more staff at this world class institution and continue to do the work that is so important to our community.

Thank you for your time.